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DEPARTMENT OF RED CROSS NURSING

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THE SCHOOLS OF NURSING IN THE OLD WORLD

I. PRAGUE

WITH the assistance of the American Red Cross and under the supervision of the Red Cross Nursing Service, there have been established in Europe since the war four schools of nursing. These are located, in order of their establishment, in Prague, Czecho-Slovakia; Constantinople, Turkey; Posen and Warsaw, Poland.

This chain of schools, each link of which has been carefully, almost prayerfully, conceived and planned, and each of which represents months of hardship and surmounting of well-nigh incredible difficulties by the patient and devoted American nurses, will constitute in time a mine of resourcefulness and technical knowledge out of which the Europe of the future may draw the material for her own needs, and the trained personnel with which to work out her own problems of health, health education, and community progress.

That the first of these four schools should have been located in Czecho-Slovakia is due partly to the influence of Alice Fitzgerald who, as Director of Nursing in the League of Red Cross Societies, was deeply interested in developing the nursing field throughout Europe, and to Dr. Alice Masaryk and her father, the president of the new-born Czech Republic. Undoubtedly it was the breadth of view, the sympathetic understanding, and the far-seeing vision of the Masaryks that crystallized the public opinion of their countrymen so that American Red Cross participation was sought in the reorganization and modernizing of the nursing profession in Czecho-Slovakia.

Under the old regime, when Bohemia, as Czecho-Slovakia was more generally known, belonged to Austro-Hungary, Austrian nurses had founded their own system of training in one of the hospitals of Prague, known then and now as the State Hospital. This term did not imply, as is often the case in America, a hospital for the care of insane patients, but denoted merely that the state controlled the institution. It was in 1914 that the Department of Health authorized the establishment of this school of nursing in Prague, with separate Czech and German Departments, but prior to this event, young women who wished to study nursing had been compelled to go to Vienna or Germany for their professional education and training.

In 1916 the first class entered this Austrian-sponsored school, and since that time some fifty young women have taken the course in the Czech section, receiving diplomas in nursing.

But the standards of the school, though higher and sounder than obtained in many of the less progressive European countries, by no means approached American ideals, and in the summer of 1919 when Miss Fitzgerald, in the course of her survey of European nursing conditions, visited Prague, the attention of all the best minds of Czecho-Slovakia was focused upon the need of thoroughly modern and Americanized systems of nurse training.

A plan was worked out, therefore, by which an able Committee, with representation from the Czech Red Cross, the Ministry of Health, and other important groups, was created for the purpose of coöperating with the American Red Cross in order to give to Prague a school of nursing from which might be graduated a type of nurses whose example and influence would gradually revolutionize the nursing standards of their country. Two American nurses, Marion G. Parsons and Alotta M. Lentell, were sent over by the American Red Cross Nursing Service, three additional nurses being later assigned, as the work increased, to assume the responsibility of reorganizing this school. At the same time two Czech nurses, graduates of the State Hospital's Training School, were given scholarships by the American Red Cross for two years' study in America, so that they might return to their Alma Mater, bringing to it the benefits of their wider experience. It was expected that upon their return they would be placed in charge of the school at Prague. Unfortunately, however, the health of one of these nurses broke down and it finally became necessary to send her back to her native land.

The curriculum covers a period of two years and includes the study of Anatomy, Physiology, Bacteriology, Hygiene, Medical, Surgical and Gynecological nursing, care of infants and children, Psychiatry, Hospital Administration, Civics and Public Health Laws and Social Care. This last named includes practical nursing experience in the field, and has necessitated the appointment of a well-trained public health nurse from America for the purpose of developing the theoretical course as well as the teaching field. A course in English is also given so that professional literature in that language may be made available for Czech nurses. The aim of the curriculum has been to make the course cultural as well as technical, for it is well realized that the modern nurse must have broad, sympathetic and social vision as well as professional knowledge and skill.

The Red Cross Nursing Service, rich and varied in resources, was found to contain the name of a Czech-American nurse eminently

adapted for duty in the Prague School. This young woman, Miss Kacena, having been born in the United States, spoke English fluently and, in addition to the qualifications connoted by her enrollment in the Red Cross Nursing Service, had specialized at Teachers College in training school administration. Miss Kacena has rendered invaluable service in teaching the practical work in the wards, her knowledge of the Bohemian tongue giving her an unusual advantage.

In the arrangement of the wards the State Hospital was fairly well suited to the purposes of a school of nursing, but facilities for demonstrating modern methods of nursing were almost entirely lacking. Equipment was most primitive, the tea kitchens and lavatories antiquated and inadequate, and little or no provision made for hot water supply. An occasional portable bath tub was seen.

Not the least of the interesting features of the Prague School, and one which marks it as in consonance with the spirit of the times, is the establishment, notwithstanding its youth, of an Alumnae Association. This organization, inspired by the American nurses, has done much to promote the social life of the school by arranging parties and occasional lectures. Though it is scarcely a year old, its influence is already being felt. Its aims are lofty and are well defined in the Constitution:

I. To create an interest in nursing in young women of higher education and good character.

II. To elevate the standards of nursing in the hospitals of the country.

III. To work for the social and economic interests of nurses and for the maintenance of high ethical standards for the nursing profession.

Writing of the newest venture in the realm of useful education for the young women of this country, the Czecho-Slovak Red Cross Magazine comments:

An organization of earnest, intelligent women with such objects in view cannot fail to be of great value to their school as well as to the individual members themselves and one may look forward to the time when the Alumnae Association of the State School of Nursing in Prague will be represented in the International Council of Nurses.

Thus far the State School of Nursing in Prague is the only one in Czecho-Slovakia which gives a recognized course of training and a diploma in nursing, therefore great responsibility rests upon it for this school must not only provide skilled care of the sick, but it must also prepare its nurses to be the future teachers, executives and leaders in this country. Other schools of nursing are urgently needed, for the whole extensive programme of public health is handicapped by the lack of thoroughly trained nurses to assist the physicians in its development. *But these schools cannot be established until there are diplomatized Czecho-Slovak nurses qualified to direct and to teach in them.*

On April 1, 1921, there were enrolled in the State School, 66 pupils, while 16 were graduated in 1921. One of the graduates of the class of 1921 has been brought to America to take the place of the nurse whose health broke down and is now taking a special course at Teachers College. She spent last summer at the Presbyterian Hospital, New York, to gain practical experience, and it is hoped that she can spend the coming summer at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, where a member of the first group of Czecho-Slovak students, who will graduate in the fall, has been studying ever since her arrival in this country. The new pupil will be given credit of one year for the work she had done in the State School, the course at the Massachusetts General Hospital being three years.

Too much credit could scarcely be given to the patient and indomitable women who have worked so indefatigably for the success of these schools of nursing. Facing famine conditions and shortage of supplies that prevailed when the Prague School was first established,—and at the time of Miss Noyes' visit, in the winter of 1920, these were so extreme that but one cake of soap, two inches square, could be issued to an entire ward each week, while the shortage of bed linen and blankets to say nothing of the limited diet of patients and nurses, were pitiful, but inevitable factors to be coped with,—these courageous souls had also to struggle against the antagonism natural on the part of those already in the school who clung to the traditions and customs that belonged to the Austrian domination. There were also the difficulties presented by a foreign tongue. Yet these nurses plodded on, in very truth the missionaries of health in a foreign land. That the school is succeeding is an eloquent tribute to their courage, devotion and optimism in the midst of the most adverse conditions.

ITEM

MISS FITZGERALD TO GO TO THE PHILIPPINES

ALICE FITZGERALD who, as the nurses of America know, was sent to Europe in 1915 as the Edith Cavell Nurse, later serving as the representative of the Nursing Service on the American Red Cross Commission to Europe, from which she went to the League of Red Cross Societies as Director of Nursing Service, has now accepted an appointment in the Philippines. She will go with Dr. Heiser, both ranking as members of the Governor's staff, their expenses and salaries paid by the Rockefeller Foundation, which has appropriated a sum for the study of health conditions in the Philippines. Miss Fitzgerald's special mission will be the study of schools of nursing in the islands with a view to introducing courses in public health nursing and the establishment, under Government auspices, of public health nursing. She expects to sail from San Francisco early in March.